

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0303

November 30, 2009

The Honorable Kathleen Merrigan
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
212A Whitten Building
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Deputy Secretary Merrigan:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you today concerning Arizona Snowbowl. As you know, this matter is very important to me and to the people of the State of Arizona.


I acknowledge the complexity of the situation you've inherited and agree that balancing the diverse demands of our national forest lands is often challenging and emotional. Fortunately, the Congress has established a framework for Forest Service decision-making which also guides public servants such as us in sorting out competing management questions. This process has been consistently upheld by the courts, including in the case of *Navajo Nation v. Forest Service*. My concern remains over what appears to be your lack of authority to indefinitely delay a court-upheld Record of Decision, the absence of a project implementation timeline, and a clear identification of your grievances against the Snowbowl improvement project.

Please understand that the people of Arizona are currently facing historic unemployment rates and the promise of permanent, long-term direct and indirect job opportunities connected to the Snowbowl improvement project will help ease the economic suffering of several northern Arizona communities. The lasting benefits associated with the enhanced outdoor recreation activities at Snowbowl are also important to Arizona, but to make the 2010/2011 ski season, construction of snowmaking infrastructure must begin no later than March 2010. In order to accomplish this, Arizona Snowbowl needs to make equipment purchases and complete engineering plans immediately.

I'm hopeful that as a matter of good government, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is endeavoring to conduct itself with integrity and transparency throughout this process. I respectfully request that the Department respond to my written questions to the Forest Service from the October 29th hearing before the Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests that were previously submitted.

Again, I appreciate your hearing my concerns and hope you understand my desire to seek a positive conclusion to this matter in the most expeditious manner possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John McCain". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" and last name "McCain" clearly distinguishable.

John McCain
United States Senator